

A Bullet Too Far

by BigBadger

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Summary: Rated T to be safe. Private Clark Davis didn't know what he was in for when he enlisted with the UNSC Marine Corps. 8 years on from that life-changing day, with the Covenant invasion in full swing, Davis has had enough. All rights for the Halo universe go to 343i. I only own my OCs.

1. Introduction - Contemplation

The figure sat there, slumped against a cot. He stared out into the hindering fog that had settled around camp. He watched the low-hanging carpet twisting in a strangely entrancing choreography. He watched the rain beat against the dirt, like a bass drum.

Hm. Drum, he thought, will the bugs kill off those, too?

He was a normal man â€" 6"1, in his early twenties, with piercing green eyes and mucky brown hair, stroking his cheeks at just above regulation length. Of course, being such a normal man, he never would've guessed that he'd ever end up here; staring thoughtlessly at an angered nature, surrounded by the faint whispers and footsteps of his dazed battalion of UNSC Marines.

Well, what was left of it, he thought.

He sat in ominous silence, recovering from the events of the past day, more questions dotted around his head than corpses littering the thick urban jungle outside.

Who were they? Why did they come? How can we hope to defeat-?

His trail of thought was broken by a smirk from behind him. He turned around, and smirked back at the figure before him.

'Done day-dreaming there, Davis?' The tall figure chuckled.

'Shut up, Mattison.' Davis replied.

Brian Mattison was a native of Arcadia. He had skin that had a faint yellowish tint, and dull blue-grey eyes. He was short, 5'6, yet intimidating; know him for more than a week, and you figure out that he's definitely not someone you'd want to anger. He enlisted with the Corps after the discovery of the 'Unknown Hostiles', and he and Davis had enrolled in the same academy. He was covered from head-to-toe in Khaki-Green plating, his marine BDU weathered-down and torn.

'What're you want, Brian?' Davis said.

'Just doing what I do best,' he grinned, 'Pulling my little pal out of the fire.'

'Aww. My hero.' Davis mused with a sarcastic smile.

'Yes. I know. Anyway, Davey, get up. El-tee wants us prepped for combat within the hour.'

'Great..' muttered Davis, reaching for his footlocker.

2. Chapter 1 - A Fistful of Fire

****Two days prior, LOCATION: Eridanus-II, Luxor City. DATE: 23/8/27, UNIT: 3/5/7[H]****

Davis was not having a good day.

He sat, knelt against an outcrop of ruined wall, his squad spread out besides him, MA37 in his sweat-dampened hands. He and his teammates, 3rd Squad, 'Hellhound' Battalion, had spent the last 5 hours desperately fighting off against the alien hostiles. His squad was currently pinned down inside a half-destroyed restaurant, with orders to hold until relieved. Their goal was to secure the street so that civilians could be evacuated.

It was not going as planned.

'Mortar! Stomachs, now!' yelled their commanding officer, Lieutenant Avens. The squad instinctively did as they were told, and not a moment too soon; Davis looked up as a blue-white orb shrieked over his head with an unforgettable 'SWOOSH', shattering in a blinding crackle of rubble and blue sparks. A marine was too slow to react, and engulfed in flame. When the smoke cleared, he was gone; no entrails, no clothing, no sign that a human being had been there a few moments ago. He was swept out of existence. Davis gulped, clearing the fear-induced lump that had formed at the back of his throat.

He swallowed hard, and stood up, steadying the barrel of his rifle against the outcrop, and was paralyzed by what he saw; an unevenly advancing huddle of small, stocky beasts, clad in shining armour that varied in colour from pale orange to bright silver. At the rear of this group stood a terrifying sight; a large, blue-plated creature, easily more than 1.5 times taller than the average man, with four protrusions sprouting from its head, clad in dog-like fangs. It was obviously the leader; it pointed directly at Davis, and the small creature that was closest raised a small device.

In an instant, a volley of green substance darted suddenly towards Davis. He instinctively ducked back down, just in time to see one of the orbs flying through the air, where his head had been motionless moments prior. He heard the multiple 'POPs' as more orbs headed for the squad; the entire group had opened fire.

'Alright, marines! Let's show these assholes human steel!' Avens screamed. He was met by a singular 'OORAH', and the marines peered out of their spread-out assortment of outcrops, and returned fire.

Chaos followed; Blue and green balls met by the crackle of assault rifles. Davis unloaded a small burst of his MA37 at a small orange alien, and to his relief, its body lulled back and fell to the floor in a pool of blue. His joy was short-lived; he heard a yelp beside him, and turned in time to see a marine flop to the floor, a blackened hole in his chestplate which gave way to an inky red blob; he had been hit square in the chest. He ducked down to help, checking the marine's pulse. With a sigh of guilt, he stood back up; the boy had been hit through the artery. There was nothing he could do. The fire fight continued onwards for five whole minutes; though in Davis' mind, that may as well have been hours. By the end of the struggle, Davis' squad of 15 men were reduced to just 7, all 8 of those casualties being KIA.

'Fuck...' The marine blurted out; still distraught given what had just taken place.

'Marines! New orders.' Avens grunted, shortly thereafter being circled by the remainder of the squad, 'we have a fireteam pulling in, with civilians; ETA 2 minutes. As soon as they arrive, we are going to head through the system of alleys and regroup with our Command Post at the Spaceport!' He paused, as if letting the already weary squad take that information in. 'We will make this quick, clean, and efficient, jarheads. Get back to base, and if you so much as glance at anything â€" and I mean anything â€" that smells like a shit, you take your rifle. And you blow off his god-forsaken head! Can I hear an Oorah?' Avens stopped, swallowed calmly, and in a few minutes he was pounded by the enthusiastic yell of the marine war cry. 'Mhm! That's what I thought!'

Ten minutes later, the fireteam, now 10-strong and escorting 10 civilians, including a young boy and his two parents, were careering through an alley on what seemed, at least to Davis, as a casual stroll towards the doors of death. Davis was at the rear of the group, as ordered by the El-Tee, his mind barely containing all the thoughts that took turns at wrestling for control of his subconscious. He stared up at the shadows that blanketed the alley; an alley that can't have been more than 3 metres wide. He looked at the sky; black-purple and almost clear. It was dominated by a large, elegantly curving black object. On its hull, at regular intervals, were glowing green panels. Gravity Manipulation devices, Davis guessed. What intrigued him the most about it was the bow. It was thinner than the rest of the vessel, and had two large, backward-swaying fins on either side, so that the vessel looked like a large, metallic, space-faring shark.

'Hey, Private!' A voice suddenly whispered, far off at the other end of the alley. It was Avens, bent over around a ventilation shaft.

'You claustrophobic or s'ming? Get your ass moving!'

'Sir, yes sir!' Davis squealed back at his superior, suddenly overcome by embarrassment, as he entered the shaft.

3. Chapter 2 - Sweat and Tunnels

The labyrinth of ventilation systems was quiet except for the pita-patter of those who were travelling through it. 'THUNK. THUNK. THUNK.' It went, the metallic clanging, though in reality not very loud, ricocheting around Davis' ears. The atmosphere within the vent stood in stark contrast to the atmosphere outside; here, in the small space, where the twenty people were crawling silently in a line on their hands and knees, there was an odd sense of peacefulness. Indeed, if one was to feel such peacefulness, they wouldn't have a clue that, metres below, a war of genocide raged unending. Aside from that, it was dreadfully humid and warm; every part of Davis' body was sticky with sweat, and he found it hard to maintain a grip on the smooth, polished titanium surface he was dawdling along.

'Damn, El-tee. You really know how to make us Jarhead's sweat,' a marine murmured, silently chuckling to no-one in particular.

'Yeah, an' I also know how to set bait for aliens. Got that, Marine?' Avens retorted. The marine gulped to clear his throat, stared down uneasily and remained silent.

The crawling that followed was to Davis agitating, awkward and depressing all at once. It was agitating because of the unending monotony of the pattering â€" 'THUNK, THUNK, THUNK' â€" and was awkward because of the aura of silence that had settled in almost instantaneously after the Lieutenant's threat. It was depressing because of the thoughts that bubbled up and down around Davis' mind, then receding; similar to an evil geniuses' concoction gone wrong. A billion and one thoughts sprung up and down like overdone jack-in-a-boxes;

What will happen when we â€" if we â€" make it through this?

How can we beat theseâ€| things?

Will I ever see Clare and Elizabeth again?

He set these thoughts aside, because, as training had taught him; a clear head is a hole-less head. He smirked to himself for a moment, remembering similar such cheesy survival 'tips' he had been spoon-fed in academy, before continuing to crawl.

And so the motion continued for another few minutes, and then, suddenly, the entire column halted.

'What is it? Why did we st- 'Davis started to say.

'SSH!' Another marine retorted, 'What is that noise?'

Davis was confused for a moment. Then he listened in; and he heard what it was. Or at least, what he presumed it was. It was a dreadful noise, a noise that would send most untrained men scaling the nearest Oak tree. It was the sound of flesh tearing away, the kind made when

an over-keen six-year-old gnaws ravenously on the chicken of his roast. Something was disturbing about this, though; it sounded animalistic, like a pack of wolves' carelessly consuming prey.

'What- What the hell, man!? Wha- What is t- I'm DONE with this, man! D-O-N-E, done!' The marine behind Davis screamed. His pupils narrowed; consumed by fear. 'I'm getting OUT of here!' He chirped, turning and carelessly hobbling back the way they had come, almost falling before his own limbs on many occasions. He got about 4 metres away from the group, when there was a loud 'CREAK', and the tile below him gave way. He fell down, groaning in pain, and was lost from sight. Only seconds later, a scream was heard " followed by the sound of tearing flesh that was heard before.

Lieutenant Avens sighed, obviously used to losing his men so abruptly and without warning. 'Keep moving, guys, he's a goner.'

Davis looked back hesitantly, the guilt swelling in the bottom of his stomach; 'What if that was me?' the voiced inside his head barked, 'what if I was the one left behind? This isn't right.' He started to turn back, when he was distracted by a pat on the helmet.

'C'mon, Davey, les'move.' The marine smirked.

The group, having been reduced by a man, continued the monotone plodding for another 5 metres or so, before coming to a diagonal plate at a slope of roughly 45 degrees; a vent exit. The child, who was now at the forefront of the group (much to Avens' duress) tried vigorously to open the vent, before getting pulled back by two adults; his parents, Davis guessed, to make way for a marine to kick the plate in. In a quick thrust of the leg, the plate collapsed to earth with a jarred 'CLANG', and the group left the shaft one-by-one.

The gust of cool air was perfectly timed; seemingly welcoming them back into the open. Davis relished, opening his mouth wide to inhale the cool wind greedily. He then looked around, observing the surroundings. They were in a warehouse; a large, rectangular chamber, an assortment of light bulbs, some flickering on, and some not at all, were suspended from a slanted ceiling 20 metres up. They were flanked on all sides by large crates bearing the UNSC emblem; at least 6 metres wide, 2 metres high, and varying in colour.

4. Chapter 3 - I Always Hated Birds

The group of Nineteen " Davis, Avens, seventeen other marines and ten civilians, had been walking about the same warehouse for about two hours now. Davis questioned how the civilians of the group, at least, didn't know their way around what seemed such a simple building.

'Well" he grunted, elbowing the woman of the group calmly, 'you don't seem to know much about this place?' He raised an eyebrow.

'No.' she said simply, 'We lived on the other side of the city. Never got this close to Luxor Spaceport before.' She finished, sighed calmly, and walked ahead.

'Marvellous...' Davis muttered back.

The group continued to be lost, and Davis was caught in his thoughts, falling behind. He continued walking with the group for five minutes, and then stopped. He saw something. Well, he thought he saw something. He looked to his left, at a thin, dark patch of ground between two crates and beneath another. In the space, roughly 5" or-so above the ground, were two beady little ovals, equally aligned. Davis' instincts told him he was hallucinating, but his boredom and curiosity took hold. He approached the corner, too quietly for the others to notice, he thought; they didn't even try to stop him. He stepped forward five paces before toppling backwards, something was on top of him.

It was an alien. And it wasn't friendly. It was avian, with two beady purple eyes, and two beaks with razor-blade teeth inside them. On the back of its head and its elbows, feathers sprouted out in a curved fashion. What Davis was most scared of though, were the teeth. It was pinning one of his arms with its hand, and snapping at his face. He struggled to hold it back, the tip of its beak snapping a hair's length from his nose at some points. The struggle continued for seconds, before both fighters were distracted by the sudden eruption of noise ahead of them;

'Contacts!' a marine yelled. His cry was followed by a crackle of assault rifles, the pop of the alien weaponry, screams of pain, and roars â€" probably the same thing that was attempting to gut Davis right now. The marine, instinctively, came back into the moment too quick for the creature. He reached into his breast pocket, slamming his combat knife into the creature's spindly neck. It yelped, sticky purple fluid oozing out of its neck and staining the Private's fingers.

He got up, retrieved his MA37, and ran back to the group. He stopped suddenly, a burning pain in his shoulder. He looked down; three frothy red scars. That creature had claws. He winced to himself at the sight, but continued on. He arrived at a circular cage (Only circular because of a chance arrangement of the cargo crates). Four marines and six civilians had been killed. Eight corpses, of the creature and of the small, goblin-frog things, were littered about. Two corpses were so close together that the blue and purple oozed into a large pool, mixing into a thick colourful puddle.

'What happ-' Davis started, patting his CO on the shoulder.

'You happened, Clark! I told you to watch our back. Instead, you go off day-dreaming in a corner, and my men pay for it!' He grunted in anger. 'All these deaths are on you, private.' He sighed, and went about directing medical attention for wounded marines and civilians. One poor lad, a civilian â€" no older than 17, had been attacked by one of the birds. His arm was reduced to a white stalk surrounded by pinkish-red bloats. He was screaming uncontrollably. That only added to Davis' guilt.

He had failed them. 10 people dead and it was because of him.

It remained like that for a few minutes; those that weren't injured talking in a depressing and awkward way, Avens barking orders to the medic â€" poor girl. Davis sat in silence, hating himself. He heard

the light rhythm of feet, and looked up; the boy, no older than four, hobbled up to the worn-down marine, putting a hand on his shoulder. 'I think you did great,' he muttered. Davis smirked, and received a smirk back.

A few minutes later, the group â€" now nine strong; five marines and four civilians, moved up. A marine sent on reconnaissance had reportedly found the exit, and it was apparently down the street from Luxor Spaceport Offices â€" their platoon's make-shift CIC. They walked on for a few metres, before grinding to a halt.

'Holy hellâ€|' the marine on-point muttered, his jaw doing slow press-ups. He gazed in awe and fear at the room; corpses of marines scattered about unevenly. There were no alien corpses, no alien blood nearby; they were prisoners. And they hadn't put up a fight. The corpses were being consumed, given how torn-up they were. Likely by the group that the squad had encountered previously.

'Keep moving, marines. Staring won't bring 'em back.' Avens muttered, patting the point-man's shoulders. Davis grimaced, wondering what had turned the El-Tee into such an emotionless prick. It took a few minutes, but finally â€" to the joy of the military and civilian personnel alike â€" they were out. Out, away from the hellhole where over half their numbers had been killed off. Davis once again felt a sway of guilt; someone, somewhere, was going to have to deliver the dreaded 'I regret to inform youâ€|' speech to all 10 of the dead peoples' families. If that were him, he would probably lose control and fall down crying.

'Would'ya look' it that.' The medic grumbled. Davis was thankful â€" her words distracted him from his depressing trail of thought. She pointed. There, in relatively good form despite a few scorch marks and the odd bullet hole, sat a transport warthog. Davis hated Warthogs â€" they were loud, hard to control and generally ended up exploding before you could turn the anti-air gun around. But what choice did he have?

'Alrightâ€| Let's, let's mount up.' Davis mused, with a slightly disappointed (yet relieved) sigh.

5. Chapter 4 - Road Rage, It Doesn't Work

The warthog bumped along with a slight mechanical hum. It had to move slowly â€" not everyone could fit on the vehicle itself, and the marines weren't about to leave anyone for dead here. Avens sat in the passenger seat, MA37 laid across his lap at a slight angle. He was staring out the side of the 'Hog, his eyes showing distant thoughts. Davis was sat in the rear compartment, the medic to his left. The child and his two parents occupied the remaining space on the compartment.

As they skidded and swerved, the atmosphere was unchanging â€" it was still awkward, and very much the same level of depressing. The scenery didn't do much to help, either â€" Davis felt haunted by what he saw. Luxor, once a marvellous city, reduced to jagged ruins of varying sizes and repulsive shapes. Rubble littered the floor amidst crumpled and torn newspapers. Scorch marks and Bullet Holes made what used to be stunning architecture unrecognisable. The best thing Davis saw that trip was the odd outcrop of untamed foliage, stained with

brown, or the occasional splintering, shattered tree stump.

'So,' whispered the woman to his right, 'you did good back there, mate.' She managed a faint smile, though her eyes gave away that she wasn't really in it. Davis turned and looked her in the face. She was Caucasian, slim, and relatively short. Her hair swept outwards away from her head, ending at her chin. Davis was pretty sure this was well above regulation lengths, but obviously the UNSC had worse to deal with than hair that was too long. Her eyes were brown, and shining. For a second, they made Clark feel more hopeful.

'Ohâ€¦ did I? Thanks.' Davis murmured back, sure that she was just trying to lighten the mood. The medic turned, and sat facing Davis cross-legged. 'Name's Cyril. But most people just call me 'Chyk.' She smirked, tapping him on the shoulder. 'How 'bout you?'

'Clark. Clark Davis.' He muttered, slightly agitated by how optimistic she sounded. 'Does she even understand what's happening?' he thought. She smiled, finally feeling as if she was getting to him.

'Well, Clark, nice to meet'cha.' Chyk stopped for a moment, and opened her mouth to speak again, but before she could there was a shout.

'Monsters! More of 'em! Got a big lizard one, too!' the driver shouted. Avens grunted in annoyance, slapping the driver's shoulder plate. 'Keep going. No-Way can they stop us.' He replied, trying to remain calm â€" and failing.

The warthog roared, pushed to its limits. The aliens cleared a path for it, but one goblin tripped over before getting away. There was a high-pitched 'yelp' that left Davis with his ears ringing. When he looked back, the bonnet was covered in oozing blue mush, with a grey mass on top of it; an arm, by the looks of it.

Davis' disgust was turned to resignation and then to horror; in Avens' hurry, he had forgotten to consider those that were not on the warthog. He looked back, seeing them collapse; gunned down as they attempted to escape the force that had turned its sights on them. A young girl, no older than eight, sprinted for the back of the Hog. She held out her spindly little arm; frantically flailing her small puffy hand around.

'Help me!' she shrieked, horror ricocheting about her voice, 'Help me please!' she wailed. Davis sat, awe-struck in horror; to the disdain of Chyk. The medic reached out her gloved hand, catching the hand of the small girl firmly in her grip. The young girl started to climb up, and then gasped â€" partly in shock, partly in horror â€" halting. Her eyes rolled back and she fell, slumping lifelessly onto her side. Three neon-pink crystalline blocks protruded from her back; a small circle of red-brown substance where they pierced the skin. In a moment, they glowed â€" exploding. When the duo looked back, there was just a soot-scarred skeleton. One more victim.

'Ohâ€¦ oh my godâ€¦' the two muttered in unison. They were about to collapse once again into depression, when a layer of green sparks wrapped around the outside of the hog. The humming stopped, and the machine screeched to an unexpected halt. The seven that remained clambered out angrily, spluttering profanity.

They huddled in a semi-circle around the wrecked hog. 'What the fuck happened, Michaels?' Avens scolded, smacking the small African-American marine in the throat. 'I- I have no idea' El-Tee,' he retorted, after wheezing to regain his breath. 'I just think-' He began to continue, before stopping. The rest of the group were confused for a moment, but then they realised what he was focussing on; a group of roughly seven goblins, 5 birds and a lizard had formed a semicircle around the vehicle.

'Oh' shit.' The group murmured at the same time. 'Defensive positions!' Avens wailed. Davis was glad to have a Lieutenant like Robert Avens on his side. Sure, he was often rash and intimidating. But he always kept his cool, always figured out what to do next. He was probably the reason that the seven people were still alive right now.

Within moments, the 'CRACK-AK-CRACK-CRACK' of Assault rifles, the 'POP-POP' of alien plasma weaponry, and the 'PECK-PECK' of the alien projectile rifles. Davis reached around the side of the hog; where he had taken cover. He squeezed violently on the trigger. Sure enough, a burst of rounds flew towards a red-coloured goblin, reducing its eye into a sticky blue pit. It collapsed. Chyk, meanwhile, raised her M6C (Medics can choose to forgo an MA37 to acquire more medical equipment) and pelted the lizard. She stood in horror as the rounds hit an invisible barrier, reduced into nothingness. The lizard itself stood completely unharmed, making a sound similar to a sadistic giggle. Davis turned his head towards a scream; a Michael was shot in the leg by a crystal, then in the neck. He collapsed, gurgling, before the crystals exploded, sending purple-red gloom into the air.

Davis and Chyk glanced briefly at each other. They both knew what was crossing their minds; _we can't possibly win this. _As much as Clark, what with his often challenged yet resolute faith in the UNSC " and the marines in particular " hated to admit it, they were both right. They were down to three marines. Michael was dead, they had no way out. There were so many more of those things out th-

There was a sudden 'VROOSH', a large green explosion, and then Davis collapsed; deafened and dazed. He forced his head up, catching a glimpse of orange-yellow flames dancing, and smoke climbing, before it lulled itself back down. He pushed his unwilling head back up, in time to see one of the lizards standing over him, glaring down. It muttered something incomprehensible, and slammed a two-toed foot into his head; forcing it down to the side.

He gazed, even more blurred, and saw, side-on, another lizard, in rose-red armour, drawing a small stick from its waist. It flicked its wrist, and the stick erupted into a white-blue, two-pronged blade. A sword. It walked up, to the fleeing woman " the child's mum " and slammed it down into her chest. With a brief scream, she slumped. The father, shielding his child from the view, yelled in objection; but was gunned down instantaneously by the energy rifle in the creature's other hand.

The boy, orphaned within a few minutes, collapsed to his feet as the killer of his family approached him. It snarled, raising its blade; and yelped. A burst of purple liquid flew from the creature's chest, and it slumped, its blade-hand twitching. The smaller, blue-plated

creature removed its foot from Davis, looking around with a sense of fear and confusion. Another yelp followed, purple fluid shooting all over Davis' breastplate, and the creature collapsed. On top of him.

6. Chapter 5 - Oh Thy Guardian robot?

****A/N:** Sorry for the late arrival of this chapter. Schoolwork as well as the dreaded writer's block contributed to that. Anyway, here it is; chapter five! I hope you enjoy, and please keep those reviews coming. Thanks.******

****_BB_****

Davis blinked, overcome by a murky mental pool of despair, shock and disgust. He lay there, motionless, for a few seconds " his new-found, Riga mort friend laying on top of him, as a kitten slouches on a sofa. 'This was the end' he kept reassuring himself, 'I'll die. But I won't have to live through these' things' again.' He shook his head to clear the admittedly ever-more-depressing trails of thought he had adopted, and he sat in blankness, silently counting the subtle yet melodic drip of the creature's turquoise blood.

_Twenty-Five, _he calculated, _twenty-five drips of blood. _It didn't seem like much, just a number based on completely irrelevant data. But for some reason, it empowered him. He felt new hope, a new sense that he _had _to survive; though how? He couldn't put his finger on it.

Davis grunted, as he shook and swayed violently in a (futile) attempt to get the hulking, lifeless blob of muscle off of him. He pushed, he pulled, he kicked, he spasmed. Nothing would work. Davis' empowerment had decided that it didn't really like helping a marine in such a bad position, and left him as abruptly and suddenly as it had arrived. He gathered one thing from this ill-spent few minutes; _Riga mortis is a bitch._

That was when he heard it.

_Clank, thump. Clank, thump. _The sound thudded through his ears. At first, Davis thought it was just some random din; a patch of debris giving way, or perhaps a corpse falling lifeless. But it couldn't have been; it was in-tune, harmonic, almost. It soothed his ears, and he suddenly felt a welcomed, yet misplaced sense of calm. His confusion was answered soon after; he heard voices.

Human voices.

'Stop stalling, marine. Is there, or is there not, anyone else?' A monotone grumble chimed, shattering the ominous silence " much to Davis' delight.

'Well- erh' I think so. But-erh' he can't have made it.' It was a woman's voice; recognisable yet distinct. It was broken, shattered by a sense of shock and horror. And it was Chyk's.

'And where, would he be. If he _was_ alive?' The unchanging, yet calm, voice retorted. Its calmness should have been a good sign " a

leader. Someone to get them out of here, perhaps. But it had a cold, depressing ring to it. It felt forced, almost. As if this was the desired perspective. Whatever it was, it was artificial " at least partially.

'Underneath' underneath one of the big ones, sir; a blue one.' Chyk replied. Well, replied would be an over exaggeration " it was a gob-smacked chirp.

There was a brief pause, and then the rhythmic, somewhat surreal 'clank' of boot-on-gravel resumed. It was growing heavier and lasting longer, at intervals of a few seconds. Whoever he was, he was getting closer. Davis closed his eyes, waiting for the inevitable death he assumed would catch up to him shortly. He was out of luck. A few seconds later, he felt the pressure lift abruptly from his battered torso. His eyes flung open with a start, and he stared; partially blinded by a beam of intense light. _Light, at midnight? What the hell' _ was the splutter that ricocheted in-and-around his mind.

When he could see, what he saw didn't exactly subtract from his fear; much the opposite. It was a hulking machine. It had a Brick-orange visor, and Foliage-green armour. The armour, from the looks of it, was at least a few inches thick. Might's well have been a walking tank! The armour clicked and ground into a different position as the thing's thick, plated arm reached forward; tearing Davis' dampened body off of the saturated floor with inhuman ease.

'Harm?' The robot suddenly grunted. The abrupt, unprovoked nature of its query only added to its mechanical aura.

'Uhm' who? What are-' Davis groaned, his voice shattered by shock.

'On your feet, marine. I've been ordered to get you back to your IC " and I _will_ get you back.' The robot retorted. The ever-serious twang in its voice made Davis feel childish, useless.

'Wait, wait. What happened to Chyk? Avens!?' Davis yelled after the thing turned away. He wasn't about to be taken for granted now; especially not by a robot. He couldn't help but notice th thing's back; a large circular console, rimmed with blue, and two exhaust ports sprouting and curving steadily upwards from the shoulder blades. This thing was advanced; it'd make the base medics salivate.

'The Lieutenant is back at base. The fuel rod hit him har-' It started.

'Fuel rod?' Davis muttered, suddenly feeling yet another negativity coming on; stupidity.

The robot grunted, blatantly not used to being interrupted; strict military doctrines, and regimental-level discipline, had such an effect. 'The alien anti-tank weaponry, with a lime-green explosion.'

'Oh,' Davis spluttered, betting on his life that he was blushing, 'right'

'Pelican transport is inbound, ETA 20 Minutes. Anything else?' it started, with the straight-to-the-point twang of monotony ever present.

'Yeah, if you don't mind; who " or what " are you?' Davis queried. He felt that the question was fair, and so his previously nervous tone did not linger.

'Calculus; call me Calculus.' It replied quietly, turning away.

7. Chapter 6 - Whack a beetle If only

****Sorry for the late arrival. Got caught up by schoolwork and the like to the point where I forgot about it. Anyway, here goes; Davis is back, credit to The Constitutionist for a plot idea or two. Any canonical inaccuracies are purely accidental. Thanks.****

Davis sat, MA5 laid across his lap. He looked to the left; seeing Chyk next to him. He looked to the right; an empty seat. It wasn't empty a few hours ago, though. No, it was just another loss. He looked at Chyk's now-glassy eyes, and nodded in an attempt to lighten the mood. But like everything else he does, Davis thought, it wouldn't work. It didn't.

He got up, and slumped himself down onto a seat to the right of Calculus, smashing the back of his head awkwardly against the bottom of the lockers as he did so. He swore he heard a robotic chuckle.

'So, how many of you are there?' Davis muttered, still not setting aside the possibility that the cyborg would zip round and throttle him there and then.

'32,' it responded. Almost nonchalantly, but Davis was pretty sure the creature was calm, '33 initially. But such is life,' Calculus added, 'but if you tell anyone of the loss you'll be in big trouble from ONI.'

'Right, erh- okay.' Was all Davis could muster? Yep.

Calculus returned to idly loading and unloading its BR33, whistling a repeating, yet never annoying, tone as it did. Davis had never heard it before, ever. Chyk was staring at the wall opposite her, glassy eyed, paralyzed. He didn't blame her; no-one would envision joining the Corps to be sent against Predatory Birds, frogs with plasma guns and shielded lizard creatures. It was all too surreal to be processed.

'Alright, we're settling down, pretty heavy load today, eh?' The voice of Flight Lieutenant Angela Gregory crackled through the speakers of the pelican, in no uniformity. 'You'll be glad to know we're back home. The bugs tried, but we've beaten 'em back at every turn, for once.' She continued, with the intent of humour, hoped Davis.

The bay gates shifted and yelled mechanically as they lowered, white-yellow sunlight creeping in briskly. The Aft Thrusters of the pelican lopped up great mounds of dust, which coiled and bent before receding into nothingness. Fitting, that, seeing the impact upon the

platoon's numbers. That dust could join the queue behind optimism and hope, not to mention over three dozen marines.

Davis and Chyk stared in unison, in a sense of awe and shock; the UNSC were winning. It didn't seem _possible _anymore, Davis thought, we've suffered so muchâ€¦ and yet, here we are. We have a chance. They shook their heads, and, of course, were in the process of being yelled at.

'Marines!' Squawked Avens, an annoyed grimace stretching from cheek-to-cheek, 'Are you fit for duty!?' he stood silent after that, fiddling with the trigger on his soot-marked MA5. Davis and Chyk glared at each other in mutual embarrassment, before chanting 'SIR, YES SIR!' at the top of their lungs. Chyk stepped down, and Davis began to follow, but stopped, and glared about, stiffened, like an alert wolf. Beneath the crackle of distant combat, the concussion of marine boots and the yells and cries around, there was a humble and yet noticeable noise; A loud mechanical groan, and then an equally robotic crash;

Awm-THUMP. Awm-THUMP.

It continued unopposed for an uneasy minute-and-a-half, before ceasing. The disturbing thing, the voice in Davis' mind needlessly reassured him, was that it sounded incredibly _close, _too closeâ€¦

The next few moments were chaos. Everything went to hell, if it hadn't paid a visit there already. It started when a colossus death machine erupted through the office complex in which the base had been established. Its base was violet-purple, with streaks of yellow where the sunlight glared off of it. It was held up by four thick, mechanical legs, akin to a scarab beetle. It's body was thin at the bottom and thick as it reached the top, and in between its two frontal legs, central on the body, was a 'flower head' with a green light in its centre. It 'looked' down at where Avens was stood in understandable horror, and the petals flanking the bulb retracted: with a large 'AWWWW' a streak of green erupted out of it, and Avens was reduced to ash. It turned, and forced the same fate upon a dozen marines and a few innocent Warthogs. And then it looked at the pelican.

Davis felt a heavy blow upon his back as he flew back into through the bay doors; the latter closing. Calculus was preparing the pelican for lift off.

'We're going!?' Davis muttered, 'Butâ€¦ what about Chyk!?' he yelled in resistance.

'No time. Such is war.' It replied simply, almost carelessly; to the former's disdain. Davis felt a dragging in his chest as the pelican took off, and he slumped to a seat in defeat. Just seconds later, Davis shot up; a green line ripping through the centre of the pelican.

'Oh, shit.' Was his response, as the aircraft shattered into two molten hunks of metal, his half careering downwards into the ruined metropolis, Calculus' mirroring the sadistic dance towards the opposite sector. He tilted his head out of the side; seeing the bar of a street lamp for a split second before it hit him.

He awakened sometime later, but his vision valued the rest and as such didn't return to optimal efficiency for another minute. When he awoke, he felt something tugging at his chest plate, and looked up.

It was a shield-bird.

This was it, he assured himself, I will die. Like Chyk, like Avens, like Calculus. Peace at 1- he stopped, the bird gazing into his eyes, blinking. He looked down, to see what it had done; his stomach was covered in fabric, purple-red liquid staining it. It _saved_ him!?

'Yooouuu. Arrreee awwaaakkkeee, human.' It observed, rather obviously. 'Goodâ€| weee moooovveee,' it continued. Its voice dragged and was interrupted by animalistic, reptilian croaks. It could speak English. Barely. 'Buut fiirrssst. My naaame, is Kaz'asha. Iâ€| ammm a friiieeeeend.' It stopped, satisfied with the information, and assuming Davis knew exactly what was going on. 'Come-come. We moooove.' It repeated this a few times, before pushing over a dead Arcadian, and taking out several of the pink needle projectiles, now blood-stained, and then a copy of the device which fired them.

It held out the... Needler. 'Weeeaaaaponry. Mooost useeeeful. Your equiivalleeent pales in comparrisson.'

It then held out the several blood-stained needles. 'Ammmuuunition. Relooaaaad like so.' It flicked its wrist, the weapon bobbing downwards, and a dozen pink spikes erupting from its rounded top.

Davis hesitated, before taking the Needler in his sweat-ridden grip. It was strangely comfortable in his hands. He practiced fire on a dead lizard for a few moments, before struggling to catch up with Kaz'asha, and thus following him into the night.

8. Chapter 7 - When All Stealth Fails

A few hours passed since Davis had his session of deep thought.

He thought about a great many things, but mostly he thought about his situation. He felt like the entire Outer Colonies was conspiring to slit his throat; Biko was lining up his shot, whilst Arcadia was crouching down below Davis' knees, and Eridanus-II was preparing to push him over and to his untimely demise.. He didn't like it.

He also thought of the people who had been lost; Chyk, Avens, Calculusâ€| why them, and yet not him? Why did he have to bear the burden of living in _this_ shit, when they didn't?

But he was past that now. Now was the time for action.

He was crouched behind a car, split into two a quarter down its length, the behemoth scarab vehicle having crushed it underfoot. Kaz'asha was at his side, which he didn't know if he should like or not, and the only source of light was a street lamp a few metres to their right; its head lurched over, undecided as to whether it should glow, flicker or stop functioning entirely. It had settled on the

idea that it should do all three, at random intervals.

Davis heard the patter of feet against saturated tarmac, and looked up through the vehicle's shattered window; 3 lizards, one in brilliant gold, the other two in eerie white. The right-most of the lizards took a detour to the right, walking past Davis; its two-pronged foot missing his knee by a hair's length. It grunted, cold white air coiling out of its face (its nostrils were not visible, assuming it had any). Kaz'asha nodded to Davis; who returned the gesture, before hurling a jagged stone across the creature's path.

Its jaws gaped horizontally as it tilted its head to face the rise of smoke, and at that moment Kaz'asha Stabbed it in the kneecaps. As it yelped and fell, Davis seized the opportunity, and in a flash of movement slammed his combat knife into the beast's neck. He was met by a humble, slow trickle of purple liquid as the creature silenced, stiffened and fell with a soft '_thump_'.

And the rest of it was hell, because, as it happens, lizard hearing is far from poor.

Davis was full of a sadistic joy; He'd killed one, without aid from anything heavy. Just him and Kaz'asha! Soon, though, that joy turned to shock, and then fear; the area around him flashed with a vibrant, quickly receding ambience of blue, and he looked back to see a ball-sized scar against the wall directly behind him. He leaped, careering roughly parallel to a stationary, emptied van with what appeared to be a white, circular logo on it; bordered by stripes, the logo of the Colonial Administration Authority. Misplaced, seeing as how useless the CAA had been when the aliens came.

Through the shattered side window, he saw the distorted figure of a lizard. But it wasn't any old lizard. It had graceful, curved and golden armour: a high rank among the aliens, obviously. Davis, the poor and stressed sod, spent so long drooling at the intricacies of the armour, and was pretty sure his lower jaw was attracted to the odour of the sewer pipes that ran beneath the street. He also spent so long staring at said intricacies that it occurred as a shock to him when he slammed his upper torso against the hood of another car; spinning and slamming abruptly against the shattered pavement. He sat there, with the world twisting and spinning in his vision, his breathing distorted just the same.

He sat up after a time lead, dripping and wet, the length of which his battered head didn't want to conceive. He was then forced back down again by the impact of a two-pronged foot, clad in golden armour that made the bleak and dark surroundings look even bleaker, and even darker. A head, much wider than even his torso, stared down at him, its vertically-slit eyelids observing him with what the beast gave across as disgust and zealous hatred. It wrapped a hand around Davis' neck and tore him up, lifting him to head-height as if that was its profession. It muttered in a sharp, and yet intelligent, voice, a voice that's apparent cunning and understanding overshadowed the actual look of such a monster. Great, Davis thought; not only are they strong and good with mind-blowingly advanced guns, they have to have brains as well?

It walked along, dragging Davis in the same way a policeman drags a murderer to his cage, and flung him into a dark, metallic-purple

container; the exterior of which Davis could not see due to the two white-plated beasts that flanked him and his captor.

9. Chapter 8 - Even Emptiness Hates Me

****A/N:** Sorry for this taking an absolute age. Politics to do with my password failing me and all that shit meant I just forgot about this. Oh well. Read at your own discretion. ******

The object lurched. It slid about the bubbling, grimy fluid which lurched and lopped enthusiastically from one side of the chamber to the other. It rode the faint tide of the motion; sinking and re-emerging slowly in its wake. It was sickly, a lifeless yellow, studded by blunted shapes of lamplight orange, without the tint of course, cocktail purple, and the like. It was sick, and the chamber it floated about in was in fact Davis' lower bowels. With good reason, he felt.

Captured, by the Covenant. He allowed this thought to regurgitate itself a few times and barrage his mind. He had heard of what happened when you got captured by the Covenant. Apparently the Lizards would tie you up and parade you about one of an assortment of compounds, completely nude, before painfully executing you ceremonially. Yikes. But the worst thing was; that was apparently the better option.

If not for that fate, you had a few delightful option of getting eaten by one of the birds, or one of theâ€¦ Gorillasâ€¦ they said. Not that Davis had ever seen any such things. Your last option would be to submit yourself to become a plaything for giant wormholes. Great, our enemies use wormholes as weapons, Davis thought, which means ONI will get involvedâ€¦

He felt dizzy. He was overthinking things; his arms were numb, whilst his eye was twitching violently. He took deep, chilling breaths, slowly regaining his nerves. All of that was assuming he actually got to a containment area. Speaking of which, his trail of thought had been so vast and coiling that he had forgotten where he actually was right now. He stood up and looked around.

He was inside a thin, roughly rectangular room. It was roughly 20ft long, and 12 ft wide, just large enough to squeeze in 7, maybe 8 marines at most, Davis calculated, however, crammed in a writhing mass that started an arms-width from his nose and continued to the end of the room were dozens of UNSC personnel. He gazed down in shock, and then looked straight ahead; opposite of him was a trooper twitching and rocking energetically, giggling and murmuring what seemed to be drivel about turning everyone into aliens. Next to him was a woman; her combat helmet dangled loosely around her neck, and her arm was a charred black stump. Her face was grazed and smothered unevenly in dirt, like it had been applied by a toddler. She was frozen; as still as a recently cemented tombstone, and as blue as a winter evening. She seemed intensely thoughtful, almost depressed, in much the same state as he had occupied just moments before.

All of this made him tingle with glee.

He soon felt bad about this.

He felt a tingle of glee simply because he realised who it was. The helmet, the cutesy expression, the eyesâ€¦. Well, actually, it was mostly the name tag. Regardless, it was Charlie Kylies; Chyk. He smirked and nodded, but was met by a cold expression, deficit of anything but the most basic and negative of emotions. So he stopped, shot down and feeling awkward, and began to wonder, yet again, what would become of him.

He eyed the dozens of battered and bruised, but otherwise (mostly) combat-ready UNSC marines, and noticed a possible flaw in the planning of the aliens. What is to stop them from, say, accidentally overthrowing those present in the building- vehicle, rather, evident by the calm, gleeful humming of alien hover technology that fitted the mood about as well as a funeral held in the middle of a carnival.

He decided to take the initiative and lead said overthrowing; scanning the crowd revealed a damning lack of mentally and physically able superiors to spank him back into line if he took charge, and everyone else seemed helpless enough.

He stood, grumbling loudly to gain the attention of the juvenile mass. It didn't work, so he tried again; louder and at a deeper pitch. After yet a third attempt, he was successful. He cleared a cunning lump that had slyly formed in his throat at the time and had taken it unto itself to violate his tongue's personal space.

'Haven't you noticed, jarheads, that there is NO ONE on this god-forsaken craft to oppose us right now?' He began preaching. He gazed over the crowd, whom would surely be amazed by such an upfront demonstration of determination, courage and charisma, only to be met by several bystanders glancing at each other, in pity or in awe, and what few remained shaking their heads at him in a demoralized fashion. He assumed this shaking meant 'no, we didn't' so he persevered.

'So, I say,' he bellowed, 'We show these Ess-Oh-Bees who they think they're dealing with!' He was on a roll now; confusion and neglect turned to strained attentiveness. 'So, to stand, dust yourselves off, and let's-

Crackle. Slam. Thump.

His confidence, his will and of course his battered body all flopped to the ground, felled like a rabid dog. He wheezed, a burning sensation eviscerating his abdomen. He looked down; two charred, circular holes, a good 10-15 centimetres apart, were protruding from his lower ribcage and making themselves at home.

His head lulled to the side and rested against the cold metallic floor; he gazed at the purple-lavender wall, lifelessly. A tidal wave of dust abruptly lunged at his eyes, causing him to cough sporadically. He looked back, to see that in a fissure of coiling blue crackles, a shape formed from the void, inches from his head. It was a familiar two-digitated, scaled and thick edifice. He dazed at it in awe, only awakened fully by a jet of hot, stuffy air spreading out against his chest. He gazed up, to see an elegantly curved, shining helmet looking back; it's head tilted slightly to the left in curiosity and disdain.

Aw, crap.

End
file.